

**The Ambassador's Participation in the Opening Ceremony of the
U.S.-Pakistan Professional Partnership in Journalism Alumni Summit
Serena Hotel
Thursday, January 31, 1845, 15 minutes**

Minister Bukhari
Patrick Butler, Vice-President of the International Center for Journalists
Representatives of the International Center for Journalists
American journalists
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

AssalamuAlaikum.

It is a pleasure to be here this evening. I always look forward to meeting with our exchange alumni and I'm particularly honored to be speaking to a group of journalistic alumni. Every day you put yourselves on the front lines, even risk your lives, to report the news in Pakistan. We salute you for doing so, and we are committed to exchange programs like this to help you.

The relationship between the people of the United States and the people of Pakistan is strong. Much of this is due to the many people-to-people connections we have established with Pakistanis like you. The late William Fulbright, the American Senator who established the Fulbright Exchange Program, said, "Exchanges can turn nations into people."

That is exactly what the U.S.-Pakistan Professional Partnership in Journalism Program does. It creates understanding and builds bridges between our two countries through people-to-people connections.

We both benefit from this in four important ways:

First, you learn about the United States by experiencing it first-hand. You work side-by-side with American journalists in news organizations across America. You come away with new ideas for reporting in Pakistan based on your experience in U.S. newsrooms. You talk to real people about the issues that matter to them. You learn about America, in America, from Americans. And then you share that knowledge with your fellow Pakistanis, at events like this media summit, and in your reporting.

Second, Americans learn from you. During your time in the United States, you teach Americans about Pakistani politics, society, and culture. You are the Pakistan "expert" for your American friends and colleagues. You appear on U.S. news programs to offer insight on Pakistan-related issues. After interacting with you for several weeks, American journalists are much better informed about Pakistan and that is reflected in their reporting.

Third, American journalists learn about Pakistan by exchange visits like the group we have here tonight from the United States. Through their interactions with you and other Pakistanis, they develop a much better understanding and appreciation of the people and the issues. This will shape their reporting and better inform the Americans about what is really happening in this country.

Finally, you develop your journalism skills. During this conference you will learn from American and Pakistani experts in the field, and they will learn from you. The trainers you have from the International Center for Journalists are some of the best in the business. You will come away from this summit with

practical knowledge that you can immediately put to use, and you'll be able to exchange ideas and tricks of the trade with fellow professional journalists.

I want to make it very clear that the U.S. government strongly supports a vibrant and independent media in Pakistan. A free press is the cornerstone of any democracy. It provides the information and facts needed for the people to hold their government accountable.

Your effort to provide the people of Pakistan with credible and informed analysis is key to Pakistan's democratic future. Pakistanis are calling for transparent, free, and fair elections as the nation moves toward the first peaceful transition to civilian power in Pakistan's history. As journalists, you will play a central role in that transformative moment.

I will leave you with a quote from the great American journalist, Walter Lippmann, who said, "He has honor if he holds himself to an ideal of conduct though it is inconvenient, unprofitable, or dangerous to do so."

In spite of the inconvenience, the dangers, and sometimes less than magnificent remuneration, I wish you continued success in the honorable work that you do. Thank you.